

## **News Release**

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Release No. 1531.98

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### **WEST VIRGINIA FARM SERVICE AGENCY LAUNCHES HAY DRIVE FOR FLORIDA FARMERS**

RANSON, W.Va., July 24, 1998--West Virginia Farm Service Agency (FSA) employees today kicked off a local effort to collect donated hay for drought-stricken farmers and ranchers in Florida.

Local FSA employees are coordinating the campaign in partnership with area farmers, who have expressed their desire to help their Florida counterparts. Many Florida farmers have lost large amounts of hay and forage due to the current disastrous drought and wildfires.

Officials of the Jefferson County FSA office are coordinating the effort to collect the donated hay and transport it by truck to Florida. Current estimates are that the hay will fill at least 5 semi-trailers.

"I'm here to express the agency's support for this effort," said Larry Mitchell, Confidential Assistant to FSA Administrator Keith Kelly. "It really makes me proud to see our people out in front on this. This kind of partnership with agricultural producers is our goal. We exist to help the family farmer, and the local Agency employees have taken that to heart."

The campaign's inspiration came from two local farmers, Tyree Kable and Lyle Tabb, who approached Jefferson County FSA Executive Director Mike Sienkiewicz with their idea. Sienkiewicz and the other county office employees enthusiastically embraced the effort.

Collections of donated hay are being made at Southern States Farm Co-Op until late Monday. The trucks will leave for Florida the following morning. Donations of cash to buy fuel for the trucks are also being accepted at the FSA office, which can be reached at (304) 725-3471.

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